

# 2 Corinthians 3 Commentary-Wayne Barber

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### 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 Authentic Ministry

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3. We're going to start a new mini-series today. We've been looking at "The God of All Comfort;" we have looked at "When Your Walk Matches Your Talk;" and now we're going to begin another mini-series. I'm going to entitle it "Servants of a New Covenant." We are servants of a new covenant, and today we're going to see one of the things that the new covenant enables, which is authentic ministry. We're going to look at 2 Corinthians 3:1-3. We may read some other verses but we'll have to come back to it.

I've always believed that if it looks like a duck, it quacks like a duck, if it walks like a duck, then it's probably a duck. Now, that's a simple illustration. What makes that illustration complex is if you've never seen a duck before. Then that means nothing to you then, what I just said about what a duck is like. Let me give you an illustration, not about a duck; most people know what that is.

I was in South Africa and I wanted to give an illustration with my beaver dam story that I've told many places all over the world. And I didn't know if they knew what a beaver was. And I said, "Do you know what a beaver is down here?" And one of them said, "A what?" They didn't know what I was talking about. You can talk about a duck, and if you've seen a duck, you know what I'm talking about. I was talking about a beaver and they didn't know what a beaver was.

You see, if we took that illustration and we put it in the context of "what is authentic ministry," we'd have a much more difficult time trying to understand what it is. You know why? Because there are so many things being done in the name of Christ in the 21st century called "ministry" that it gets confusing. And what we have to do is to peel back layers after layers after layers to find out biblically what is authentic ministry. Like peeling an onion back; and sometimes the tears will flow when you start peeling it back. It's kind of like an illustration of unwrapping something and finding out what it really is.

A police officer pulls over a speeding car. The officer says, "I clocked you at 80 mph, sir." The driver says, "Gee, officer, I had it on cruise control at 60. Perhaps your radar gun needs calibrating." Not looking up from her knitting, the wife says, "Don't be silly, dear. You know that this car doesn't have cruise control." As the officer writes out the ticket, the driver looks over at his wife and growls, "Can't you please keep your mouth shut for once?" The wife smiles demurely and says, "You should be thankful your radar detector went off when it did." As the officer makes out the second ticket for the illegal radar detector unit, the man glowers at his wife and says through clenched teeth, "Woman, can't you keep your mouth shut?" The officer frowns and says, "And I notice you're not wearing your seatbelt, sir. That's an automatic \$75 fine." The driver says, "Yes, well, you see officer, I had it on, but I took it off when you pulled me over so that I could get my license out of my back pocket." The wife says, "Now, dear, you know very well that you didn't have your seatbelt on, you never wear your seatbelt when you're driving." As the police officer was writing out the third ticket, the driver turns to his wife and barks, "Why don't you please shut up?" The officer looks over at the woman and asks, "Does your husband always talk to you this way, ma'am?" I love this part. She says, "Only when he's been drinking." Talk about peeling the layers back.

When the Spirit of God pulls us over in life to examine whether or not our ministry is truly authentic, then what is it that might be discovered that we didn't want anybody to see? For instance, Paul has just told us that with true ministry it is God, not man, that opens the doors of ministry. And since God opens those doors, no man can close them. What God initiates, God sustains. When Paul went down to Troas, God opened the ministry for him there. And in 2 Corinthians 2:12 he says, "Now, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord." But when he didn't find Titus at Troas, even though a door for ministry had been opened, he left to go to Macedonia to check on him. And verse 13 says, "I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia."

You see Paul shows us that God is more concerned with a hurting brother than what we call ministry sometimes. It wasn't an emotional whim that caused Paul to leave an open door of ministry and go looking for a brother who might be in trouble. Christ had led Paul to go after Titus. Now, how do we know that? From the text, how do we know that? I'll tell you how: because Paul was a man that was chained to the chariot of the Lord Jesus Christ, so wherever Christ was leading, he didn't tell Christ where to go, he was chained to His chariot.

Verse 14 says, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." Now, Paul uses a powerful imagery here from the Roman culture. And what he was doing was describing his own submission to the lordship of Christ in his life. "Chained to His chariot" was a beautiful picture of that imagery. He's talking about a triumphant processional of a conquering general. And when that conquering general would come through town, with that gold embroidered robe with flowers and the four horses that were drawing it and the branch in his hand and the baton in the other, but chained to his chariot were the generals of battle that he had conquered. And Paul's analogy is, Christ is that conquering general and the believers who are allowing Him in their life to speak through and say to them what He wants to say, to conquer their lives daily to where they are totally captive to Him, those are the ones chained to His chariot of victory.

If we're willing to let Christ conquer every area of our sinful self, then we walk in His victory wherever we go, whether it be through an open door of ministry or if God leads us away, it's Him leading us away and we walk in victory wherever we are. When Paul left the open door at Troas, he knew that if God had opened that door that it would be open when he came back. No man could close that door.

And Paul goes on to show that the person that is chained to the chariot, there's a sweet fragrance that comes from their life that speaks of Christ. Wherever he goes people see that's a man under the lordship of Christ. Verses 15-16 says, "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?" We could put it this way: Paul says some are going to like it and some aren't going to like it when we are slaves to Christ, when we're slaves of His righteousness as he says in Romans; when we're chained to His chariot. Some will, some won't; and he says, "So be it." In fact, he's so overwhelmed with that he says, "Who is adequate for these things."

But one thing will be for certain: the ministry of the one who is conquered by Christ and who is chained to His chariot will be unmistakably authentic and people will see it. It will stand out in stark contrast against those who like the false teachers of Paul's day preached a different message, preached a whole different message of what man can do for God, rather than what God can do through man. By the way, you know who I think these false teachers are that have been coming against him? It doesn't specifically outline it, but some of the things that Paul says, particularly in our text today; I think they are those Judaizers that chased him everywhere he went. Couldn't stomach the message of grace because it was all about them and not about Christ. And I believe they followed him everywhere he would go.

But in verse 17 he makes a statement to contrast his ministry and theirs, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." What a beautiful text. And then this leads us beautifully into what we're going to look at today. You see, they didn't have chapters and verses. It was just one letter. It just continues to flow. What is it about authentic ministry that is such a marked difference to that of a person working in their flesh? What is the difference? What is the significance? What is the contrast of what Jesus does through a person and what a person might be able to do for Him?

You see, the marked difference is transformed lives that are the result of that. Not the life of the individual; he's captive to Christ. It's what Christ reaches through the people that God touches and changes their hearts. You see, authentic ministry will not necessarily be seen in numbers. It could be, but it's not seen in that. It's seen in lives that are changed. Lives that are changed from the inside out. No man can do that. Only God can transform a human life.

#### The proof of authentic ministry

And so we want to look today at ministers of the new covenant and how that enables us to be authentic in ministry. There's something about the new covenant that will come up in our message that you'll see, that enables a brand new way of looking at things. A brand new way of doing things. First of all, the proof of authentic ministry.

Now, before I read the verse, let me tell you the history. In ancient times the standard way a person or his ministry was approved was a letter of recommendation or letters of recommendation from sister churches that were sent that he took along with him and that gave him credibility in what he did. Just like today men—now listen carefully to what I'm saying—men had a way of judging men as to whether or not their ministry was authentic. Paul had evidently been criticized by these false teachers and evidently when he went to Corinth and that church began; remember he didn't go to start a church. God opened that door also. He went to make tents and he met Aquila and Priscilla who were also tentmakers and the church was burst out of simple obedience to God.

But when he went he didn't have a letter of recommendation. Mainly, I guess, because that wasn't what he went for. But, knowing Paul, he didn't take one anyway. And the church started and these false teachers capitalized on that and said, "You know what? He's not authentic. He didn't bring a letter of recommendation." They must have said to everybody, continued to say, this man and his ministry are just not valid. They don't measure to the standards by which we measure ministry.

Verse 1 then, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? Paul says, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?" Now, by saying that, Paul is referring to what he just said in verse 17. Remember, verse 17, he shows a contrast of two different styles of ministry. Two different messages are proclaimed. He says in verse 17, let me read it again, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God."

Now he had shown a huge contrast to the false teachers and so he comes back and the false teachers would say, "There he goes again. He didn't have a letter of commendation so he has to make these kinds of statements to give credibility to his ministry." The word again indicates that this has probably been done before and he's been accused of it before. So the word "commend" then is the word *sunistao*, and it has the idea of "to prove something or to establish or to confirm something." It's used nine times in 2 Corinthians, which shows you the depth of the problem that Paul was facing because these people were saying his ministry is invalid, his message is invalid and he is invalid. He doesn't have the proper credentials.

You see, ministry that is of man—now listen carefully—must be approved and measured by man, or to man it's not acceptable. Boy, not much has changed today, has it? This past week I got an email from a church in another state and they told me they were looking for a pastor and they gave me some qualifications. They had a little deal that was all printed out and it was just this past week. And it said on it, you must have a Master of Divinity degree or higher, must be of older age and have experienced a church of over a thousand for at least ten years. Must have that kind of experience. And it went on and on and on, and when I was studying this passage I thought to myself, not one time in that whole list of requirements, why didn't it say this: he must be a man who has been conquered by Christ. He must be a man who is chained to God's chariot. He must be a man that has transformed lives in the past that would give him credibility. Didn't have a thing to say about that. Didn't have a thing to say about that. Didn't even have a thing to say about when he was saved or anything else; when he was called. Man has his own way.

You see, a piece of paper, nicely framed—you know, they make some beautiful frames today—that just makes that piece of paper look even more valuable. And he has a degree on it: PhD, DD, fiddle-dee-dee, whatever degree you want to put on it. A nice piece of paper and a whole list of well-known, credible references do not qualify a person for ministry biblically. But oh, listen, in our society, oh yes, it would there. This is what Paul refers to when he says, 'Or do we need some letters of commendation to you or from you? Is this what you're saying to me? Is this what you think I'm doing?'

Being criticized for not having proper credentials in man's eyes was nothing new to Paul. We studied the book of Galatians together, and in chapter 1 they criticized him of not being an apostle, not having the stamp of approval from the apostles in Jerusalem. And he says, "You know what? You're exactly right. I didn't go up there for three years." I love Paul. He said, "I didn't go up there for three years. And when I did go up there I didn't go to get a little degree that made me credible as an apostle from the apostles. I went up to see Cephas," which is Simon Peter, the Aramaic name for Simon Peter. And he said, "While I was there, old James came over. Boy, it was good to see James, but I didn't go to get credibility from them. That's not what I did." Then in chapter 2:1 it says fourteen years later he goes up, but this time he doesn't go up to get an approval from them. He goes up to check them out to make sure they understand the message of grace by taking Titus and Barnabas with him.

This followed Paul wherever he went. What do men think about ministry? That is never the question. The question is, what does God think of my ministry? We live in a different day but there is nothing new under the sun. Mankind has his own ways of approving ministry. Do you know what mainly it is? Numbers and nickels. If you get the numbers it must be right and the people that are running the big churches, and you say, "Wayne, we are a big church." Hey, I'm talking about big churches. We're little compared to some of these. And the people that have all the other stuff, they must be right, let's let them be our authority and that's the day we live in because man does not know how to adequately approve what ministry is.

So Paul answers his own question; it's rhetorical. Verse 2, "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men." I love what he says. He says it's ridiculous that you would say we need certified letters of recommendation; because of your transformed lives, believers in Corinth, you are our letter of recommendation. Paul says without Christ living in and through us, without being chained to His chariot, without being conquered to His will daily in our life, our ministry would be invalid. And he says no matter how many letters we could bring and no matter how many degrees we could put on the wall, our references would be vain. But, he says, if our ministry was not valid, then you as a church in Corinth would cease to exist: you wouldn't even be there today. You are our letter of commendation.

You see, when God is using a man that has been to the cross, a man that has let Jesus conquer that man in every area of his flesh,

when he comes to that point and the fragrance of Christ flows out of him, it touches people's lives and it changes them from within. And that is the proof of authentic ministry in any century that we live. That's what Paul is saying. That's what he's saying. I've heard it said that a man's ministry is more important after he leaves than while he's there. Because if it's centered on Jesus, when that man leaves it will continue right on to be centered on Jesus. That's what ministry is.

We live in such an interesting day; everybody is looking for a formula. Everybody is looking for a quick fix. Listen, it's Jesus or it's nothing. And if I'm not going to get right with Him, if I'm not going to let Him conquer me in every area of my flesh, if I'm not going to be chained to His chariot, I can forget what He says ministry is. But I can fit like a glove in what man says ministry is all about. It's two exactly different paradigms here he's talking about.

#### The Person of authentic ministry

So the proof of authentic ministry is transformed lives of the people Christ has touched because of the fragrance of Jesus that has been able to flow through one's life. But the second thing is the Person of authentic ministry. The Person who initiates, the Person who sustains authentic ministry is Christ Himself.

It's Jesus finally being able to be Jesus in us. In verse 3 he says, "being manifested that you are a letter of Christ," you're our letter of recommendation, but you are a letter of Christ, "cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts." Christ living in Paul, and through Paul changed these people from within, and He wrote them as Paul's letter of recommendation. That's what it was. Paul says, "being manifested that you are a letter of Christ."

The word "being manifested" is *phaneroo*. It's the word that means not just to be visible, but to be conspicuously visible. That double "o" on the end of the verb means not just something that is visible, it's put on display. It's conspicuously visible.

Have you ever written in invisible ink? I didn't know much about it. I just had it on my mind yesterday and I got on the internet and found out. You know what? That's neat stuff. You can get the kind that washes off, too. But you can also get the permanent kind. I didn't know you could do that. You know how you read invisible ink? Because if it's invisible, how are you going to read it? You take a black light and you shine that black light on that invisible ink and suddenly you can read it. It comes alive. You can clearly see what it says. Boy, when I saw that, you can see the illustrations going through my brain.

The apostle Paul takes the false ministry of these false teachers and he puts it up as a back drop and he shines a black light on it and when that black light is turned on, the black light of that false ministry, suddenly people can see clearly what his ministry is all about. It's amazing; you really can't tell the difference until you put them side by side. That's what Paul is saying. That invisible ink that is written can only be seen up against the contrast of something that is false to people who don't understand it's the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the ink to the Corinthian church. When Paul's ministry is put up against the black ministry of the false teachers there it just showed up. It just came alive. People could see the difference and could read what was clear.

Christ working through Paul had touched the hearts of the Corinthians and the Holy Spirit had written them as a letter that proved his ministry. And he said it was read by all. Everybody knew it. Verse 3, "being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us." That little phrase "cared for by us" is the phrase *diakoneo hupo hemon*. Now that's a different word. That word "cared for" is more of a "servant caring," and it doesn't refer to the relationship of a servant to a master, it refers to the work itself. It refers to the service that is actually done.

The apostle Paul says, "You want from me a letter of commendation? You don't even realize that you wouldn't be a church if it hadn't have been for Christ working through me which is what authentic ministry is. All the pain, all the time that has been spent, all the letters that we have written, all the evidences of the fact that Christ was working through us in your behalf and you still want a letter of commendation?" Paul now is going to begin to explain why the ministry he had results in transformed lives. And folks, he's going to begin to introduce the new covenant.

Now the new covenant enables the authentic ministry. In verse 3 he says, "being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of human hearts." And if you know anything about the Old Testament, that ought to come alive with you. The phrase "not on tablets of stone" refers to the law and the Ten Commandments. When Moses came off of Mt. Sinai and he had those big tablets in his hands and there were Ten Commandments, God had written on those stones. The law was God's standard, not just for Israel, but for all men. But here's the downside: no man could live up to it. That's why it says about Jesus when He came He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it: dotted every "i," crossed every "t." He is the fulfillment of the law, the One who gave the law came to fulfill it and now lives in us and when we obey Him, love is produced, and love is the fulfillment of the whole law.

But, you see, that law was the standard that condemns every man. There's no man that can attain to what the law demands. The stone tables upon which the law was written is the perfect picture of the hardness of men's hearts, to whom it was given. In fact, in the promise of the New Covenant, the New Covenant that you're under and the New Covenant that the apostle Paul was under,

Ezekiel prophesying that says to Israel in Ezekiel 36:26, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

You see, because of the condition of man’s heart, the law only produced dead works. It didn’t come from the heart. It could only produce a change in behavior; it could not produce a change in the heart. The law could in no way produce what it demanded. As a matter of fact, Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, “This people honors Me with their lips but their heart is far away from Me.” See in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, has come to live in us: that’s the promise, that’s the mark of the New Covenant. He has changed us from within; He has given us a brand new heart. Listen to what Peter says in 2 Peter 1:3-4. He says, “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.” God gave us a new heart. We have partaken of the divine nature of God. Our heart now is His heart. He beats within us. It’s His passion, it’s His burden. That’s what effects authentic ministry.

If you want to go back to the Old Testament, then you can have religion and performance and you can change your behavior and you can have all the dead works you want, but when you come to Christ, He that fulfilled the law comes to live in you and gives you a new heart. You become and I become partakers of His divine nature. Christ has given us a heart of flesh. Now you understand the difference in stone and flesh. Flesh is pliable; flesh can yield; flesh is tender. That’s the difference.

When Christ comes to live in one’s heart, that individual has just entered into the promises of the New Covenant, the covenant of grace. And when he chooses to daily allow Christ to continue to conquer him, and he lives chained to His chariot, his ministry is not of the old, his ministry is of the new. And what happens is, it is seen not in numbers and not in nickels and not in noses. It is seen in transformed lives of human beings that no man, no man could have ever done in a million years. The covenant of grace: it’s no longer up to man as it was in the old. Now it’s up to Christ who lives in man in the new. Christ living in us, changes lives through us. We don’t; He does. And the changed lives become evidence of authentic ministry, which is the result of living in the New Covenant.

Law or religion can change behavior. Law or religion can change performance. But only Christ can change the heart. He is our reference. Paul said, “You mean I need a letter of recommendation to you? You wouldn’t even be there if God hadn’t done something through me to change and transform your life.” Here is our reference: The changed lives of those to whom He’s ministered through us with the sweet fragrance of His presence, they become our letters of recommendation. Our adequacy is in Him.

What layers is God peeling off in your life? What is He peeling off today? What is it that maybe you didn’t want anybody else to see but He’s peeling it off like an onion, one at a time? Why would He do that? Because He so loves us. I’ve seen what He’s done in my life.

In verses 5-6, and we won’t be able to get to today, “Not that we are adequate in ourselves.” Oh, I’ve been so excited to get to these verses I could hardly stand it. I’ve never preached through 2 Corinthians. You want to know the Christ-life, you want to know the New Covenant message I’ve been trying to preach for years? It’s about to come out in ways in which you can’t miss it. You can’t miss what he’s about to do here. “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves,” boy, wouldn’t you like to take that to the table of those people who are evaluating other people’s ministry, “but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” We’re going to look next week at the adequacy of the ministry. Today it’s authentic ministry, but next week we’re going to look at the adequacy. It’s only in Christ.

Let me ask you a question today. Are you willing to admit what you’re not apart from Him? I find this to be the most difficult thing I have to deal with in my life. Are you willing to look at the sickness of flesh? Are you willing to look at the deceptive things of flesh? Are you willing to let God just peel back layer after layer? If you are, let me tell you this on the authority of God’s Word, the same confidence Paul has I have it this morning. If you’re willing to let Him do that, the best days of your life are ahead in ministry.

I remember when God got a hold of me. I cried for three days. I couldn’t believe it, couldn’t believe all the stuff He was showing me about myself. You know, it’s a bittersweet message, isn’t it? It’s like full of pain, but it’s so sweet on the other side.

## **2 Corinthians 3:7-11**

### **The Adequacy of Ministry**

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3. We’re doing another little series as we go through 2 Corinthians entitled “Servants of a New Covenant.” This is part two of that particular little series. It started in chapter 3. We’re looking today at verses 7-11. Now, I don’t want

you to get frustrated. I cannot get as far as I want to go and so we're introducing something that the next time we're together we'll pull together and as you read ahead of me you'll see what I'm talking about.

But let me get you into these verses and make sure we're in the flow of what scripture is saying. Paul, in verses 5-6 of chapter 3 has introduced the fact that he is a servant of a new covenant. Now, that's a profound statement, especially for the apostle Paul. He's a servant of a new covenant. He says in verse 5, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves." You see, in the old covenant you had to be adequate in yourself, but obviously proven inadequate by what the law demanded. "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter," talking about the old again, "but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Now, what Paul is introducing here has already been introduced in his messages, but what he's saying is the new covenant, if you boiled it down, is all about Jesus Christ coming to live in the hearts and lives of people who have trusted Him for their salvation, trusted Him as their Lord and Savior. This is what the gospel is: this is good news. God's good news: Christ has come to live in the hearts of those who trust Him. So Christ coming to live in a believer makes the believer adequate. He enables the believer to be everything He demands the believer to be. Everything we aren't apart from Christ, He is in us.

Now if anybody in the New Testament understood this, the apostle Paul understood it very well. He says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who lives but Christ lives in me." That is the essence of the new covenant. "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of Man who loved me and gave Himself up for me." You'll find this theme in just about every epistle that Paul writes. Even in Philemon when he writes and tells a man to forgive a slave that has run away, and this man can't do that unless God in him empowers him to do it. And when I was in conference work I wanted to put together a series, "The Christ-Life in Philippians," "The Christ-Life in Colossians," "The Christ-Life in Galatians," because it's everywhere.

Paul was a religionist that was completely turned inside out by the new covenant: Christ coming to live in him. Paul knew above anybody that when Christ came to live in him, He came to replace him, not to renew his flesh, but to replace him. Because you see, Paul was honest. When a lot of us are not willing to be honest, he was honest. He was willing to admit what he could not do. He began to realize what the flesh really could not accomplish and so therefore he needed to be replaced by the Holy Spirit of God. Listen to his words. Now there are his words; if you didn't know that Paul wrote it, it would sound like many of us on any given day of our life. Romans 7:14-25, some people say, "Oh, no, he's lost at that time. He couldn't have been saved." That's as far from the truth as you can get it because the text itself will explain itself.

He says in verse 14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh," still fleshly, there's something about me that I deal with. He says, "sold into bondage to sin." That flesh has been sold into bondage to sin. That's why you don't walk in the flesh: you walk in the Spirit. "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." Now, I'm going to be honest today. How many of you could have said that about yourself in the last month? Anybody besides me? "The thing I want to do I'm not doing." He says, "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good." If you didn't have the Law, you wouldn't know what was expected. You wouldn't understand where you were.

"So now," he says in verse 17, "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me." Can you imagine a person who is lost standing before God saying, "It's not really me, it's sin that dwells in me. It's not my fault." He's a believer who understands the principle of the flesh: the depravity of the flesh. He says in verse 18, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me," and some people would say, "You see there, he has to be a believer because Christ lives in him." But they don't keep reading. Just keep reading, "that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." Brings that up twice. "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law," now look where this law is, "in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."

And then he says, "Wretched man that I am!" That's like saying "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows but Jesus." Now, let me ask you again, have you had days like that? Anybody besides me? "Wretched man that I am!" He sees the flesh for what it is. "Who," not what—there's no formula here—"Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God," I really want to do it, "but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

I wish we could put this in front of us on our mirror every morning. Anything I do today in my own power, in my own strength, in my own wisdom, with my own expectations, I am serving the law of sin. When are we going to get it? When are we going to understand that? Thank God for Paul, that he understood it. In Romans 7 he's just simply being honest as a believer. He came to understand what he says in Galatians. It can't be "me" anymore. It's got to be Christ living through me.

I want to tell you, that's a tough place to come to, to realize what you're not; to see the depravity of the flesh; to see how it will tear a person apart to get what it wants. When you begin to realize the wickedness of the flesh, it makes us all fall on our knees and say, "Oh, God, how desperate we are for Your grace to work in our hearts." Paul saw that Christ came to replace him, not make him better. Paul as a Pharisee was a religious man, and sincere in every effort he had to do well for God. But the problem was, he impressed everyone but God. You see, God is only impressed when He looks at us and sees Himself. Christ met Paul on the Damascus road as Paul was going to arrest Christians, of all things. And He blinded him for three days, and Paul was never the same again. All that he had accomplished for God in the religious world, all of those things he had done for God, he said, "According to the law I was found blameless," in Philippians 3. He now looks at it as rubbish. Every bit of it: just rubbish.

Listen to his own words in Philippians 3:7-11: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [that means to know by experience], for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law [I don't want to ever think that I've done anything that God calls righteous other than say "yes" to His will and His Word], but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." Paul is saying the deadness of my flesh to love people that are unlovable, in the deadness of my flesh to get what I want done, in the deadness of my flesh, I want to see Christ's life replace that. I want to experience His resurrection power. He says, "and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

And one of the implications of that particular verse is that I might be the living out there among the dead. Paul discovered that he could not live the Christian life. If we could just get half of Christianity in the 21st century to understand that. I see books all the time on how to live the Christian life; you can't live the Christian life. Christ is the Christian life. He comes to live in us, to live that life through us. You see, He will and He promised He would if we'll just bow before Him. Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand when they began to say, "You didn't have any letters of recommendation," in 2 Corinthians 3. He wanted them to understand that anything he did that men would applaud, anything he did apart from the power of Christ, meant nothing: he was a total failure apart from the empowerment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only Christ in Paul could produce through him a ministry that was authentic. And changed lives are always the result of believers who allow Christ to live His life through them. The results of Christ living through a believer are irrefutable. You can't miss it and nobody can argue with it. When you see a transformed life, it just shuts everybody up. It shuts the skeptic up. It's not a matter of intellect at this point. It's a matter of somebody being transformed from the inside out. Nobody argues with a caterpillar when they see a butterfly. They just accept it. There's something beyond. It's irrefutable.

Well, Paul was not adequate in himself. And that's the strongest statement I think he makes so far in chapter 3. "I'm not adequate in myself. I don't sit down at a table and plan out my strategy for how I'm going to do this and that and ask God to bless it. I am not adequate in myself." Christ was his adequacy. As Paul says in verses 5-6 again, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant." Now he mentions in the last part of verse 6 the letter of the law. He says, "not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The letter of the law demanded a certain standard that Paul couldn't reach and as a result of that it killed every one of his efforts.

It kills all of our efforts. The hand of God is not upon that which a man comes up with and asks God to bless. In fact, the law condemns every effort before salvation and after salvation to produce ministry or anything that God would look at and say, 'That's good.' God doesn't say that about anything unless He sees Himself in it; unless He sees it originate from Himself. But we must be living as servants of a new covenant, like Paul said. It's not a passive life. It must be lived by faith. I don't know how many people come to me and say, "You're preaching passivity. I don't have to do anything. Is that what you're saying?" No! It's not what I'm saying. You're listening in the right ear but you're not listening in the left ear.

People aren't hearing any more. They're not hearing what he's saying here. You have to walk by faith. Walking by faith is the discipline of the Christian life. If we're going to experience Christ daily in our lives, we must walk by faith in Him and in His Word. He says in Colossians 2:6, "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him." How did you receive him? By faith. Then so walk you in Him. How did you receive Him? By faith. Then so walk you in Him. How do you walk in Him? By faith. Living by faith means trusting Christ and Him alone.

Well, today in our text Paul is going to begin to talk more and more about God's presence in us. It's amazing how he does it. How that God's presence in us changes us from the inside out and qualifies us as being authentic and makes us adequate in Him. The only thing that can mask this change—now hear me well—the only thing that can mask what God is seeking to do in and through my life is my unwillingness to bow before Him. And when that happens, then that change is not going to be seen. His hand will not be seen on my life. It will not be seen on your life. We have masked it because we have chosen to do things in our own way to

accomplish what we think He would bless.

Now let's look and see what we can learn from this. There are two things that I'm going to show you. But let me read the Scripture for you and then we'll jump in. Verse 7, "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory."

The fading glory of the old covenant

Now, what is the key word that went all the way through that verse? What's the word? "Glory." He's talking about the glory, and you've got to remember that. He's already set the direction. That's what he wants us to see. And there are two things that I want us to see.

First of all, the fading glory of the old covenant. Now, let me explain to start off with the word "glory." And I think in the simplest and most understandable way I can get it across is, "glory" is that which brings true recognition to someone or to something. So the glory of God would be that which expresses either visibly or verbally the true recognition of Who God really is. Now, Paul, in helping them to understand his ministry as a servant of a new covenant, takes them back to Moses. Moses is not what he's talking about. Israel's not what he's talking about. He's going to talk about the glory that was on Moses' face. He wants us to think about the glory that was there.

You have to realize that when Moses had received the Ten Commandments, when he was on the top of Mt. Sinai, he had to go up to where he could be in the presence of God. And it was there, alone with God, in the presence of God. And the Scripture says that God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with a divine finger. You say, "It does not say that." Well, excuse me, but in Exodus 31:18 here's the word, "And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mt. Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God."

Now does that mean the literal finger of God? I'm just telling you what it says. By the way, the Bible was never written so God could understand it. The Bible was written so that we can understand it. And many times there are terms that are used so that we can understand and get the point. God was the One who gave the Ten Commandments. But what Paul is bringing out is that Moses was in the presence of God. It's not what God said in the Ten Commandments; it's not Moses' leadership over Israel. He was in the presence of God. No one was ever in the presence of God that remained the same; nobody.

You see, rarely would He ever expose Himself to anybody until Jesus came as the revelation of Who God is, because God dwells in an unapproachable light, and no man can get near it. People say, "Oh, Jesus came in my bathroom this morning and we talked. We're just good old buddies." No, sir. If He came in your bathroom this morning, and He revealed Himself to you, you'd be trying to find a crack in the floor somewhere that you could crawl into. John, one of the favorite disciples, passed out when he saw Him. Very few people have ever really been in the revealed presence of God. And Moses was there in the presence of God, and the glory of that presence changed his whole face. It was on his face.

Verse 7, "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory." Now, notice how he calls the Ten Commandments the "ministry of death." He's making a contrast here. He's making a comparison, "the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones." As we've already seen, the law condemns all men because it demands a standard no man can meet and therefore turns right around and pronounces judgment of death, eternal death, for those who can't meet it. So it's a good thing, but it's a bad thing. It's sort of bittersweet. It brings about death, but Paul says the law which was given to Moses, here's his point, not the law, not Israel, not Moses, it came with glory.

Now the word "came" is the word *ginomai*. *Ginomai* doesn't mean it was really over here all the time, it just got up and walked over here. *Ginomai* means it came into existence. It had never been before; it came into being from God and with glory. What it's saying here is it came right out of God. God spoke it; God gave the law. No man could ever say that he came up with the law: God gave it.

Now Paul explains that the law came from God in whose presence Moses had stood. And again, the glory of God's presence, this is the key, radiated on Moses' face. Paul says, "so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face." Now, let me ask you a question. Have you ever been out in the sun and gotten sunburned? I'm fair-skinned, and so if I get out in the sun very long—and this is not a good illustration, by the way, to compare what Moses had seen when he stood in the presence of God, but to give you an understanding—and you go out in the sun and you get sunburned. And when you come indoors, everybody knows that you've been in the presence of the sun because the glory of the sun shines on your face and your body. It's left a mark. There's something there that radiates that you've been in the glory of the sun.

Moses had been in God's presence and the glory of God shone visibly on his face. But it's significant to note the last part of that



verse when he said the people could not look intently at the face of Moses. Now keep on reading. He says that was “fading as it was.” That glory that he had been in had immediately begun to fade away. The word for “fade” there is the word *katargeo*. And the word is the word that means “ineffective;” it means in this case to fade into non-existence.

Let me explain it to you this way—and again I apologize; the illustrations never cover a biblical truth, but to give you an idea—let’s say last summer you spent the summer in the glory of the sun. And you got tanned; you had the glory of the sun on your body. And it just reflected that you’d been out in the presence of the sun. And then winter comes and that glory does what? It fades away. And then now we’re coming into summer and everybody is wanting to put on those bathing suits and go back out on the beach. We walk out there and we’ve got our bathing suits on and we’re lily white. Now, it’s interesting. The glory of the sun of last year has faded away. Now we’re all doing the same thing. You have some that have been in the glory; you have others that have walked away from it. And it’s easy to see some are tanned, some are white. We dress the same way, pretty much, and so what’s the difference? The glory is the difference.

And that’s what I want you to begin to think about. How many people come to church that have been in the glory of God and you see it on their face, you see it in their smile, you see it in the sweet attitudes they have towards people. You hear it in the sweet words they speak. You have other people doing the same thing, but they’ve not been in the glory and you can see they’ve walked away. Hang on to those thoughts because Paul, I believe, that’s the germ thought of what he’s saying here.

Moses went up to the top of the mountain to get into the presence of God and there God appeared to him. But he had to walk away from that presence. Why? Because in the old covenant, God was with them on a temporary basis, but He didn’t live in them. And you had to go to where you could meet with God; whereas it’s different in the new covenant. He knew that the glory on his face would fade away. In fact, he put a veil over his face, verse 13, “and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face.” Why did he do that? So that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. He knew what was happening. He knew that the glory was fading away. He didn’t want them to see it. It’s like when you get suntanned in the summer and all of a sudden you start wearing long-sleeved shirts. You don’t want people to see that the glory of the sun is fading away.

The significant thing is that the glory that radiated on Moses’ face was just external. That’s all it was. He had to go into the presence of God. And it was externally affected and he walked away. It was temporary and it was external. Again, verse 7, “so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses.” “Look intently” is the word *atenizo*. It means to “fix your gaze on something,” like you’ve forgotten your glasses and you’re trying to read a menu in a restaurant and you’re fixing your gaze on that; you’re trying to see it because you can’t see it without them. Whichever, but it means to focus on something and look at it intently. And I think with his context here you could also say “to catch a last glimpse of it before it fades away.”

You say, “Where are you going with all this?” Don’t leave me, stay with me. He’s referring to the fact that Moses realized that the glory was fading, and he didn’t want people to see that on his face. Do you see what he’s doing here by contrasting the Law and contrasting the new covenant? The Law, which many of the false teachers preached in Corinth, was only given for a short time. The glory of that Law was fading away, even as the glory on Moses’ face was fading away. Yes, it was given in glory, and it was good, Romans 7 says, but the glory was only temporary and the glory was something external. It was never meant to remain.

Paul had to say to the Galatians in 3:19, “Why the Law then?” That’s a good question. If it’s not meant to remain, if the glory of it was only for a short time, if it only dwelt with the externals, then why the Law? And he answers it. “It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed,” who is the seed he speaks of in Galatians 3? Jesus Christ; “until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.” It was just temporary.

In fact, Paul tells us in Galatians that the Law was like a babysitter. It’s like a tutor, the same thing as a babysitter. It had to draw the lines, it had to hem us in and make us ready for the covenant of grace which the Scripture says Jesus came in the fullness of time. Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ,” it has a great purpose in it, “that we may be justified by faith.” And that’s new covenant terms there. God’s presence to Moses was accompanied with glory.

But it’s external effect; this is what I want you to see in the passage. Its external effect was temporary and it was external. That’s the only thing it had; it was fading away. When we seek to minister in the energy of our flesh, now listen carefully, performing to the best of our ability, thinking we really know what is good when God has to make that good, when we do that, the glory, now listen to me, of God’s presence is non-existent. It has faded away. And that’s why religion is a cold, calculating, manipulative, cruel and mean thing to have to be up under. Thank God Christianity is not a religion; it’s a relationship, a covenant relationship, a new covenant relationship with the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. And the glory of which will never fade away. There’s no recognition when we do it ourselves and in our own strength as to Who God is and human flesh does in all of its ability.

I love to read about Dwight L. Moody.? God used that man. He had a fourth grade education; talk about letters of recommendation. He had a speech impediment and God used him to shake two continents for Christ. Let me show you why. In an account, a man was writing Travel with Moody, he puts this story: One day during his great mission in London Mr. Moody was holding a meeting in a

theater packed with a most select audience. Noble men and noble women were there in large numbers and a prominent member of the royal family was sitting in the royal box. Mr. Moody rose to read the Scripture lesson. He attempted to read Luke 4:27 out of the King James, and he said, "Many lepers were in Israel at the time of Elisius the prophet." Now that's Elisha. When he came to the name of Elisius, he had a speech impediment. He stammered and stuttered all over it. He went back, embarrassed, to the beginning of the verse and read it again. And when he got to the word Elisius, he could not get over it. He went back a third time, but again the word was just too much for him to be able to say in front of all these eloquent and educated people. He closed the Bible with deep emotion and he looked up and said, "Oh, God, use this stammering tongue to preach Christ crucified to these people."

And this man said the power of God came upon him and one who heard him then and had heard him often at other times said to me that he had never heard Mr. Moody pour out his soul in such a torrent of eloquence as he did then. And the whole audience was melted by the power of God.

That's new covenant, folks. The glory of the old has faded away. The presence of God is not in the old. The presence of God is eternally resident in the new. That's why Paul says, "I am now a servant of a new covenant." So the fading glory of the old covenant.

The everlasting glory of the new covenant

Secondly, the everlasting glory of the new covenant. Big difference in something that's fading and something that is everlasting. Now, don't miss this: only when Moses was in God's presence, he had to go to meet with God, did the glory shine on his face. And the moment he walked away from the presence of God the glory began to fade away. You see, it was external only, temporary and external. I want to keep making you hear that. But Christ, folks—and if this doesn't make you shout, maybe it will hit you about 3:00 in the morning and you'll wake up your neighbors—Christ is the glory of God.

First Peter 4:11, "Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever." And then to seal it off he says, "Amen." I like that word. It means "don't you even think about changing this one because that's it." Christ, the glory of God comes to live in us. That's a big difference from the old covenant language. Moses had to go to be in the presence of God. The presence of God has come to live in you and me as believers. Christ is the essence of the new covenant.

And in verse 8 of our text he says, "How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?" Oh, folks, Christ's effect on us is not external but it's internal; and it's not temporary, but it is everlasting. Look over in 4:6 and see what's happened. You see, God's glory is in our hearts. I don't have to go up on top of a mountain to meet with God. I don't have to come to church to meet with God. Listen, I can meet with God, He lives in me. I live daily in the presence of God. Remember, you can't be in the presence of God and remain the same. It changes an individual. Chapter 4:6 says, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

He has come to shine in us. And on Mt. Sinai it shone upon Moses. But He's come to shine in us. We're eternally affected by the glory of God shining in our hearts. But as the new covenant believers have the glory of God in us, we need to learn how to let it shine through us. The ministry of the Spirit is inward, not outward.

Now, put together what Paul has been saying since verse 1 of chapter 3. Christ, the glory of God, was shining in Paul's heart as long as Paul lived, how? Chapter 2, chained to His chariot. This produced through Paul authentic ministry and it resulted in changed lives. Paul didn't need letters of recommendation to take to the Corinthian church. My goodness, he was a man chained to the chariot of God. God lived in him; His light shined through his life and that changed people everywhere he would go. The whole church of Corinth is a living example of that.

Christ in Paul was his adequacy and what people saw on the outside of Paul was a result of the glory of God working on the inside of Paul. Paul was a servant of the new covenant. In his weakness, which he had now come to realize his own self efforts, Christ's strength now was made perfect in his weakness, as he will say in this letter later on. Are you showing on the outside this morning, the glory of the One who is living on the inside? Paul calls the greater ministry of the Spirit the "ministry of righteousness." I love that.

The letter kills, remember? But the Spirit gives life. He says in verse 9, "For the ministry of condemnation has glory," even though it was temporary, "much more does the ministry of righteousness," not just have glory, "abound in glory," supersede beyond our imaginations. God gave both the Law and the covenant of grace; both were with His glory. Gave the Law, it came with glory, because it came from God and a man had to be in His presence to receive it. But in the new covenant it came within, Christ came to live in us and we walk today in the presence of God. The greater glory is in the new covenant because Christ is our righteousness.

You see, the old covenant demanded a righteousness we could not produce. In the new covenant, God has come to live in us to produce that righteousness through us. First Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." When Jesus is being Jesus through me, righteousness that meets

the standard of God's requirement is being taken care of. As a matter of fact, in Galatians 5:14 he says, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word," love. And he goes on to say that's the fruit of His Spirit. The Law is taken care of right there because in the new covenant; the glory of God lives in us.

To describe the ministry of the Spirit, and how it's so much greater than the Law which condemns human effort, Paul says, "For the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory." And that word "abound" is the term that describes a greater contrasting effect. It so changed Paul. You read the New Testament and you see the difference in him. In fact, when the old covenant is compared to the new covenant, the glory of the old has completely faded away: it's gone. You can't even think about the old when you think about the new. The two—one was meant to lead to the other, and it was only temporary.

Second Corinthians 3:10, "for indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it." The new covenant completely does away with the old covenant of Law in that sense. It's now written on our hearts, the One who gave the Law, the One who fulfilled the Law, the One who paid the penalty for those who couldn't measure up, has now come to live in us. The glory of God lives in us and we say yes to Him, the Law is taken care of. It doesn't mean it's ignored; it's taken care of.

Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." "I gave the Law," said Jesus. "I certainly know what it says. And I knew you couldn't do it so I had to become a man, the God-Man, and I fulfilled that Law and I went to the cross for you and now I've come to live in you." So Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:11, "For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is [not with glory but] in glory." There's no more demand for us to perform for God, folks.

I guess this passage is beginning to help me to explain to you the heartbeat I've had as your pastor. I told you day one; this is going to be my message. This is what changed my life; this is where I'm going to camp out. I can be in Genesis and come up with this message. Somebody said, "Good grief, is that all you ever preach?" No, it's the well everything comes out of; and if a person doesn't understand this he gets off on the wrong track. And I'll tell you how you know God's hand is not on it: because Jesus reveals His glory in His resurrected power and when He enables me to love people and speak sweetly to people and to treat people in a nice way, when He enables me to rest in Him, when He enables me to accept whatever circumstance comes my way, and let it drive me to Him, when He drives me to prayer, then I know, I know that it's Him.

But when I grow frustrated, critical, mean spirited, judgmental, I know the glory has faded away. I'm under that which has no glory whatsoever. I'm trying to do what that already tells me I cannot do. And you know, folks, one day I'll die, but that message is going to stay alive because one day you're going to stand before Jesus and so am I. And we're going to be judged by works, either by fleshly works that will burn, or the precious works that were caused by the glory of God's presence in our life. The only thing that fails the glory of God that now lives in me and you is when we choose, foolishly, to think we have a better idea than God has and we're going to take the matter in our hands and we're going to make it happen. And the veil drops; it has faded away.

That's the difference in living after the flesh in religious mindset, in living under grace in a Christ mindset. God will use every circumstance to drive us to this truth, and I think with everything that we deal with, God is working overtime. He's driving us to this truth, folks. He's driving me to it; he's driving you to it. When are we going to understand that? Romans 8:28; do we believe this? "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called accordingly to His purpose." Do you know what that means?

When I first studied that verse I said, "Lord, do You even mean You use mean people? Let's get rid of them." And He said, "All things." You mean He uses people that are not like me? That aren't as talented as me, aren't as gifted as I am, that have different personalities, that are better looking than I am, do you mean He uses them? Yes. To do what? "To work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

And somebody says, "What good?" Good, I'm glad you asked. Verse 29, "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He [Jesus] would be the firstborn among many brethren." Do you know what the glory is doing inside of us? It's getting rid of us so that He can be seen in us. The less there is of us, the more He is seen in us, and the glory of God can be recognized as to Who He truly is, when we walk without veils, when we let Jesus shine from the inside out. His presence in us is forever changing us into His image. That's what it's all about.

Christ is the glory of God. He lives in us; He manifests His glory through His power to enable us to be what we ought to be. Three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, were with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. And when He was there, as he was praying, what happened to Him? The glory of God, the shekinah glory of God began to emanate through His clothes and they saw it. "Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? Do you mean to tell me now He lives in me?" That's exactly what I'm telling you.

Now let me ask you this: does His glory emanate through you and touch other people? By the way you're kind to them, by your words, by your attitude, by your willingness to accept and to rest in the things that God puts in front of you? Does the glory shine or have we pulled the veil down because it's summer just after winter and the glory has faded away? Where are we as a church today?

Where are we? Where are you as an individual? You know, you say, “There are other things that Paul is saying here.” I’m sure it is. But I know this, I know this is what he’s saying here because the word “glory” is the predominate word used in that whole thing. That’s his point: the glory that changes us from the inside out.

## 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

### The Presence of His Glory

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3, and we’re going to talk about some great things. And we’re going to begin to introduce something that will not be finished this time. It’ll have to take at least another message because Paul continues right on to develop it. We’re talking about now, servants of a new covenant. What I’m doing as we do 2 Corinthians is breaking it into small series. We’ve talked about the God of all comfort. We saw that for at least 11 verses in chapter 1. We’ve talked about when your walk matches your talk. What does that look like? And then we’ve just started talking about servants of a new covenant. This is part 3, and we’re talking about the presence of His glory, verses 7-11.

Now, let me just get you into this in case you haven’t been with us for a while. Paul, in 3:5-6 has introduced the fact that he was a servant—and this is so profound—of a new covenant. He says in verse 5, “Not that we’re adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.” And verse 6 says, “Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” You see, what the Corinthians had not yet grabbed—they had, it hadn’t been revealed to their hearts yet—was that the new covenant is all about Christ coming to live in the hearts of those who have by faith trusted Him to be their Lord and Savior. This is so uniquely different from the old covenant of law.

This is what the gospel is all about. The gospel means God’s good news. That’s what it’s all about; Christ coming to live in believers to become our adequacy, to enable us to be that which He demands us to be. Everything that we’re not apart from Him, He is in us. Paul of all people understood that Christ had come to live in him. I mean, he’s the one who said in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ, and it’s no longer I who live, but Christ lives [where?] in me, and the life which I now live [after salvation, in the flesh] I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

This is the theme that runs through almost every epistle that Paul writes. Matter of fact, when I was in conference work I wanted to do a series on the Christ-life in Philippians, the Christ-life in Ephesians, in Colossians, in Philemon when he wrote a man to forgive someone knowing he couldn’t apart from the enablement of God in his life. It’s everywhere in Paul’s letters. Paul knew that Christ came to live through him and to do through him what he had already discovered that he could not do himself.

I want you to listen to his words in Romans 7. Now, listen to them, because sometimes they almost sound like an echo of you and me daily in our lives. Listen to what he says in verses 14-25. And remember, some people think this is when he was lost. Oh no! Oh no, not at all! This is Paul being honest about what he understood about his flesh. And he says in Romans 7:14, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh,” there’s something about me that’s still fleshly, “sold into bondage to sin. For what I’m doing I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I’d like to do, but I’m doing the very thing I hate.”

Let me stop there for a second. Raise your hand if you’ve had that thought maybe in the last several months. Thank you. I understand. We’re the choir here tonight. Verse 16, “But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.” If it hadn’t been for the Law I wouldn’t have understood this. “So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me.” And somebody says, you see there, he had to be lost because Christ lives in him. And then he goes—if you just keep reading it explains itself—“that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I’m doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”

Can you imagine a lost person telling God, it’s really not me, it’s sin that dwells in me? It’s not my fault. No, no. This is a believer being gut honest. “I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body,” remember that body of flesh, “waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members [of my body]. Wretched man that I am!”

I wonder if you understand that, “the wretched man that I am” has the idea of “nobody knows the troubles I’ve seen, nobody knows but Jesus.” Have you had days like that? Have you had any days when you got up in the morning and you said, “Oh God, I’m going to do it and I’m going to do it right?” By the end of the day it’s “O wretched man that I am! Who [not what; there’s not a formula here] Who will set me free from the body of this death?” And then he gives the answer. “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand, I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.” Wouldn’t

it be great to put over every committee meeting we have, every time we get together to do anything “with my flesh I’m always serving the law of sin.”

See, Paul in Romans 7 is just being honest about what he’s come to realize about his own flesh. In the last days when he wrote Philippians, when he wrote 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, when he wrote those books and he talks about “I’m the chief of sinners.” No, he starts off and he says “I’m the least of all the apostles,” and then he says “I’m the least of all the saints,” and then he says “I’m the chief of sinners.” It’s amazing the closer you get to God the more you understand the desperation that you have for the message of God’s grace.

But I’ll tell you what, it’s a tough place to come to when you have to admit what you’re not apart from God. Paul saw that Christ came to replace him, not to make his flesh any better. Paul as a Pharisee was a religious man who was so sincere in trying to do right before God. But the problem was, he impressed everyone but God. God is only impressed when He looks at us and He sees Himself. Christ met him on the Damascus road, blinded him for three days and changed his life forever. He, because of this and the faith that was placed into Christ, he came apart, became a part of a new covenant. He had religiously been a part of the old, but now he’s a part of the new. All that he had accomplished in the religious world growing up and as a Pharisee and all those accomplishments listed in Philippians 3, he looked at as waste and rubbish, every bit of it, every bit of it.

He says in Philippians 3:7-11, listen, this is his own words, he says, “But whatever things were gain to me [back when I was a Pharisee, back when, according to the law I was found blameless], those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.” It’s good that he counted them loss because he did suffer the loss of all things. “And count them but rubbish [and that word “rubbish” is not really rubbish, but we’ll leave it alone] so that I may gain Christ,” and then he says, “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law.”

I don’t want all the accolades from people. I don’t want to be in Time magazine, he says, as being the greatest preacher in the country. I don’t want any of those accolades. I don’t want anything that I could have done in my own ability, “but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith; that I may know Him,” and that means to experientially know Him as God reveals Himself as we trust Him. “That I may experience His love, that I may experience His forgiveness, that I may experience His life and the power of His resurrection, out of the deadness of my flesh I want to see His life raised up, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death in order that I may obtain to the resurrection from the dead.” In other words, that I might be the living among the dead.”

Now that’s quite a radical difference from an old religious rascal, the most religious person you can find in Scripture, to a person who has entered into the new covenant. Paul discovered he couldn’t live the Christian life. It’s incredible how many books tell you how you can live the Christian life. You can’t live the Christian life. The only one that can live it is the One who demands it, and that’s Christ who lives in us. That’s why he says Christ lives through us. But Christ in Paul, he knew could and would live that life if Paul would just simply bow before Him and trust Him.

Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand that everything that he had done as a minister, Paul had done as a minister, was a total failure apart from Christ doing it through him. He wanted them to understand he could have letters of recommendation stacked a mile high, but that didn’t mean a thing when it came to ministry. It had to be Christ enabling him and producing that ministry. Only Christ in Paul could produce, when we’ve looked at this as review, authentic ministry. The Corinthian church itself was evidence of that as we saw in verses 1-3. They couldn’t say a word. Even though they were skeptics there of Paul, they couldn’t really say anything. The church came alive, not because of Paul, but because of Christ in Paul.

Changed lives, transformed lives, are always the result of a believer living as a servant of the new covenant. Because it’s not the believer anymore; it’s Christ in and through the believer. Big buildings, numbers, noses, mean absolutely nothing to God. It’s the changed lives of people that have been touched by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ living His life through surrendered vessels. The results of Christ living through a believer are irrefutable. Nobody can refute them and nobody can miss them. Nobody can explain them except that Christ did it. Paul was not adequate as a minister apart from Christ working through him.

He says that Christ was his adequacy in verses 5-6 again. He says “Not that we’re adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.” He talks about the letter of the law. He says, “Not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The letter of the law demands a standard before salvation and even after salvation. It continues to demand if that’s where a person wants to live. That’s why Paul says be real careful, because if you’re going to try to live the law, if you mess up in one area, you’ve messed up in all of the areas, and no man can attain that. Christ came and attained it for us and now He lives in us.

And what the Law did to Paul once he became a believer—and I think that was his struggle in Romans 7—is it killed everything, every effort he put out because it condemned it. It wasn’t produced by Christ who lived within him. In fact, it condemns all of our

efforts to produce ministry. It condemns every one of them. There's no touch of God on them. God's hand's not on anything a man comes up with and asks God to bless. Only that which God does, does He anoint. What He initiates He sustains.

We must understand that living as servants of a new covenant is not some kind of passive lifestyle. I hear this so much, of people who don't really hear with both ears. They're hearing on the one side, yes, it's Christ doing it through them, but on the other side for whatever reason they hear passivity and that's not at all the truth. You see, the same way we receive Christ by faith is the same way we must now walk to experience Christ daily in our lives. Colossians 2:6, "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus." What does that mean? In the same manner, the same manner. You've received Him by faith. You couldn't save yourself; it wasn't any human effort. Now, as the same way you receive Christ Jesus so walk in Him. Living by faith means trusting Christ, His Word, and Him alone.

Well, today in our text we're going to begin to see that if Christ lives in us His very presence in us begins to change us, and others begin to see the change on the outside. The only thing that can mask the change that God brings in a believers life, the only thing that can veil it, is when you and I choose to do things our way and it's veiled that which Christ is seeking to do in and through us.

Let's look at the passage we're going to look at and then I'll come back. And we're refer to two things in these verses. Second Corinthians 3:7-11: "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more the ministry of righteousness does abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case had no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory."

The fading glory of the old covenant

Two things I want you to see. I'm sure some of you are saying what in the world did you just say? Well, let's just see if we can understand it, okay, two things. The first thing Paul brings up is the fading glory of the old covenant. As we begin let me explain what glory is. Let me put it in the most simple and understandable terms I can. Glory is that which brings recognition, true recognition to someone or something. So the glory of God is that which expresses, whether verbally or visually, the true recognition of who God really is. So think about that. When you think of glory, it's pointing to someone. It's reflecting who he really is, whether, like as I said, verbally or visually.

Now Paul, in helping them to understand his ministry as a servant of a new covenant, this is what he's doing here. He takes them back to when Moses received the Ten Commandments. You have to realize that Moses was alone with God on Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given to him to give to Israel; alone with God, in the presence of God. As a matter of fact, the Scripture says God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with His divine finger. Now sometimes we get hung up in those things. And the Bible was not written so that God could understand it, it was written so we can understand it; and so there's several terms like that that sometimes, "the eye of the Lord," etc., things like that, but it's very important.

He says in Exodus 31:18, "When he had finished speaking with him [up on Mount Sinai], He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone written by the divine finger of God." But that's really not what Paul's getting at. He's already touched some of this before. What he's doing now, the emphasis he's bringing out here at this point is to bring out that Moses was one of the few people that got to literally stand in the presence of God. No one was ever in the presence of God and remained the same. In fact, it says He dwells in unapproachable light and no one can approach that. So it's very rare when God would reveal Himself. So Moses got to stand in the presence of God and the glory of God, that which points only to God.

Nobody can take away His glory. He says in Isaiah 42 and Isaiah 48, "I'll share My glory with no man." And when God's glory is revealed there's no mistake. He was in the presence of God and His glory changes people once they realize who He is. It changes you; you're never the same. You're never again the same. I pray that every time that I preach or we sing that somehow God will reveal Himself to somebody's heart, that they begin to get an understanding of who we're dealing with here, that this isn't some casual thing that we do called Christianity. This is our life.

And who is this God that we bow before? Well, it says in 3:7, "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory," now I want you to notice something. He's already said the letter kills. He's already talked about the condemning nature of the law. And he says here the Ten Commandments given to Moses, he calls the ministry of death. Why? Because it sent out a standard that no man can live; therefore, it pronounced the judgment on all for eternal death. And so "the ministry of death in letters engraved on stones." So the ministry of death is that which condemns all men; the covenant of law condemns all men.

But Paul says, the law which was given to Moses however, even though it condemns men to death, pronounces a sentence of eternal death, it came with glory. Now it's interesting. The word "came" there is not the word you think it is. It doesn't mean it was sitting over here so it came over here. No, it's the word ginomai. Ginomai doesn't mean came, it means came into being, came into existence. It never existed before until God spoke it. And Paul explains that the law came right out of God. The glory and the

recognition of who God was, was in that, and how He not only did it, but in what He said. He gave the law, the glory of God's presence. Once Moses had stood there and watched, this radiated on the face of Moses. Paul says "So that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of His face."

Let me give you an illustration of that. It's going to be very trite and it's not going to anywhere close get to what Moses experienced here that Paul's bringing out. But let me just give you an understanding. Have you ever been in the presence of the hot sun and you've gotten sunburned? I'm fair skinned. I burn real quick. Now, when you walked indoors and people saw you walk indoors, the glory of the sun was all over your face. It left a mark. It left a visible expression of the glory of the sun. It's there when we're sunburned. In a similar sense—not in exactly the same—Moses had been God's presence and the glory of God visibly shone on his face.

But it's significant to note that he's not through there. This still is not his focus. He goes on to say "fading as it was." The word is *katargeo*. *Katargeo* means when something becomes ineffective. And in this particular case it means to start fading into nonexistence. You know, summer time's right around the corner and, you know, during the winter time, unless you go to a tanning place, you're pretty white. You know what I mean? If you put your bathing suit on right now that's a scary thought. But we'd be white. We go out on the beach as soon as summer comes and the people that haven't gotten a tan yet, that haven't been able to get out into the glory of the sun, they go out and all the glory of the sun that they had last year has faded away. And now when they come out they're pretty bland and they're white.

Isn't it interesting; you can have people on the beach and you can tell who's been there before. You can tell the tourists from the locals. You can tell it why? Because everybody's doing the same thing. Everybody's dressed pretty much the same way. But there's a difference; the glory of the sun is on some and the glory has faded on others.

Now understand what he's doing here. This is probably as clear as anything in Scripture in the difference of the old and the new covenant. Moses went to the top of the mountain and there God appeared to him. But as he walked away from that place, from the presence of God, immediately, even though the glory was on his face, it began to fade away. In fact, Moses put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from seeing the glory fade away. We won't get to verse 13, but look at it just for a second. He says in verse 13, "and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away." The significant thing is that the glory that radiated on Moses face was two things: it was external and it was temporary at best. It was about to fade away.

In the phrase in verse 7 when he's says, "so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses," the little word there "look intently," is *atenizo*. It's the word which means to strain to see something. I mean, you're just looking and you're looking. That's the idea, to squint down and focus in and try to read something with a fixed gaze. Maybe it could be referring to simply the glory that was on his face. I don't think that's what he's saying, because that's not where the text goes. I think they're trying to get one last look at it before it fades away. It's referring to the fact that Moses realized that the glory was fading and didn't want them to see it do so, so he veiled his face.

Now I'm going to ask you a question. Do you see it? Do you see what he's doing here? The law, which many of the false teachers preached in Corinth, that were criticizing him and tearing him down as to not being authentic, was only given for a short time. It had a certain purpose, but it was fading away. It was never meant to be everlasting. It was only meant for a certain reason. Paul says in Galatians 3:19, "Why the Law then? [Good question.] It was added because of transgressions." People needed to know that they were sinners, and the only way to know is to know the standard. "Having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made." What was the Law for? It was only for a temporary time until the covenant, the new covenant of grace could come. It was just temporary.

In fact, Paul went on in Galatians and he said the Law was like a tutor or a babysitter. It had to contain, to fence us in. It had to contain us, but only for a short period of time. Galatians 3:24, "Therefore the law has become our tutor [to do what?] to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith." No man will ever be justified by faith if he thinks he can obey the law in the energy of his flesh. God's presence, as Moses stood there in front of it, was accompanied by His glory. And that glory was external on the face of Moses, but it was only temporary; it was fading away. When we seek to minister, when we seek to live the Christian life in the energy of our flesh, performing to the very best of our ability, the glory of God's presence is non-existent. It has faded away. There's no recognition as to who God is and what human flesh does in all of its creative ability.

But when you see the glory of God, when you see the divine enablement upon a person who knows he's weak, when you see the divine empowerment of an individual who knows what he can't do apart from God, that's when the glory of God is back. That's when the new covenant is being served. That's when the new covenant is manifested.

Let me give you an illustration of that. I love stories about Dwight L. Moody. He had a fourth grade education, speech impediment. God used him in his weak state to shape two continents for Christ. And a story about him says one day during his great mission in

London Mr. Moody was holding a meeting in a theater packed with the most select audience. Noble men and noble women were there in large numbers and a prominent member of the royal family was in the royal box. Mr. Moody arose to read the Scripture lesson. He attempted to read Luke 4:27 which says "and many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [that's Elisha in the Hebrew] the prophet." But when he came to the name Eliseus, he stammered and stuttered over it. He went back to the beginning of the verse and began to read it again. But when he reached the word he could not get over it. He went back the third time, but again the word was too much for him and he just couldn't get it out.

He closed the Bible with deep emotion and looked up and said, "O God, use this stammering tongue to preach Christ crucified to these people." The power of God came upon him, and one who heard him then and had heard him often at other times said that he had never heard Mr. Moody pour out his soul in such a torrent of eloquence as he did then, and the whole audience was melted by the power of God.

If you cannot see the difference in the old covenant whose glory has faded away and the new covenant that has to be Christ and when He enables an individual He reveals His glory in His divine enablement; and when you see a divinely enabled and you see authentic ministry and you see adequate ministers that's a person who is a servant of a new covenant. That's what it's all about. You can get letters of recommendation and stack them up at this high. It means nothing in the sight of God. But the trail of transformed lives from your being a willing vessel to be yielded to Him grants us authenticity; it had to come from God.

So the fading glory of the old covenant. Now, some of you haven't been with us and so you don't know the background of this is why I'm saying some of these things. Paul has already said, "Do I need a letter of recommendation to you?" Are you kidding me? Do you mean I've got to be commended to you at Corinth? Do you not know you are my letter? You wouldn't be a church had Christ not birthed you. I had nothing to do with it. I was just the vessel.

The everlasting glory of the new covenant

But the second thing he wants us to see, not just the fading glory of the old covenant, but the everlasting glory of the new covenant. Now, folks, don't miss this; only when Moses was in God's presence did the glory shine on his face. But when he walked away the glory began to fade away. You see, its effect again was external and temporary. But now listen to me carefully. Oh, man! Christ, listen, is the glory of God. Let me read a verse to you. Maybe you don't believe that. First Peter 4:11, "Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God. Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified," now listen, "through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever." And then Paul as if to put the big exclamation point on it says, "Amen!"

That means don't you ever change that. Jesus is the glory of God. Now listen to me, listen to me. See if you can catch this. Christ, the glory of God, comes to live in us. He is the essence of the new covenant. No wonder Paul says in verse 8 of our text, 2 Corinthians 3, "How will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?" Oh, folks, Christ's effect on us is not external. I don't walk in His presence and walk out of His presence. I am daily in His presence. Why? Because the glory lives in me. It's not up on Mt. Sinai to where I have to go and meet and then walk away and it fades away. The glory of God, Christ Himself comes to live in us in the person of His Spirit.

Turn over to 4:6 and let's just see what he says. He's headed this way. We're going to be here for a while. It says in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shown [now look at this] in our hearts to give the light of the glory, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of [whom?] Christ." We are eternally affected by the glory of God shining in our hearts. But as we as new covenant believers have the glory of God in us in the person of Christ Himself, the ministry of the Spirit is inward, not outward.

Now put together what Paul has been saying since verse 1 of chapter 3. Christ, the glory of God, was shining in Paul's heart. When? As long as Paul was living chained to the chariot back in chapter 2. This produced through Paul authentic ministry resulting in changed lives, the Corinthian church being the example. Christ in Paul was his adequacy. The glory of God was his. He revealed that glory by enabling Paul. And what people saw on the outside of Paul was the result of the glory of God that was working on the inside of Paul. Paul was a servant of a new covenant. In his weakness, which he had now come to realize, Christ's strength was made perfect.

Let me ask you a question. Are you showing on the outside the glory, the true recognition of who He is, of the one who's living on the inside? Paul calls the greater ministry of the Spirit the ministry of righteousness in verse 9. You ever tried to be righteous and do it yourself? Remember the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Second Corinthians 3:9, "For is the ministry of condemnation, the law, has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory." You see, God gave them both. There was glory in each, but one was external and temporary and faded away. The other comes by faith in Christ Jesus who is the glory of God who comes to live in us.

But the greater glory is in the new covenant, because Christ is our righteousness. Paul's already told this church in 1 Corinthians



1:30, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” To describe the ministry of the Spirit and how it’s much greater than the law, we must condemn human effort. Paul says in verse 9, “For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.” The word “abound” is the word meaning when you contrast two things it far surpasses the other.

Well, I want you to know the new covenant does away with the old. It’s faded away, folks. In fact, in Christ, if you’re looking at Christ and calling yourself a believer trying to live under the old covenant it’s futile. It’s like running downhill with no brakes. I mean, it’s futile. There’s no glory in it. There’s no hand of God. There’s no touch of God in it. People that are religious can’t seem to get this. Christianity is not a religion; it’s a covenant relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ His Son and God sent His glory, the One whose essence of who He is comes to live in us.

Well, Christ is the glory of God. He lives in us. He manifests His glory through His power to enable us to be what we ought to be. Do you remember the Mount of Transfiguration. And remember when Peter, James and John were there, and the glory of Christ began to do what? Shine through His robes. Isn’t that awesome! I’ll tell you what, people make Christianity such a shallow addition to their life in the 21st century, and they don’t have a clue that the glory of God comes to live in the life of a believer. And the only way you can veil that glory is to choose to do things in your own strength and your own power. That veils it right there and shuts down the glory and shuts down the witness and shuts down the anointing that could be touching other people.

You see, the difference in the old and the new, the commendation of the new, changed lives. The commendation of the old, letters of recommendation and a list of all the things you did for God which will burn at the judgment seat of Christ.

## **2 Corinthians 3:12-18**

### **Living in the Freedom of the Spirit**

Okay, 2 Corinthians 3:11-18. Actually, our focus text will be 12-18, but we’re going to look at verse 11 here in a bit. This is the fourth message in what I call “Servants of a New Covenant.” Paul introduced that in verse 6 and we’ve been preaching through 2 Corinthians just taking a series at a time as we adopt his thoughts that he’s given to us. Today we want to talk about living in the freedom of the Spirit. Don’t you just like the sound of that?

Now, let me get you back into the flow just for a second or two. In our text the apostle Paul, when he was falsely accused by these false teachers of Law in Corinth, there were other false teachers there but particularly these, he didn’t really defend himself. If you’ll notice carefully he defended the doctrine on which he stood. Now, I know I’m getting up there in age, I’m not that old yet. I’ll be 62 in July so it’s not that bad, but getting older is not for sissies. I just wanted you to know that. But you know, one of the things I’m noticing and I’m noticing it nationwide and everywhere, doctrine is not that important to people anymore.

And, you know, that’s a sad testimony of where we are in our spiritual growth. Doctrine is what defines us. Yes, Jesus is our foundation, but in another sense it’s also foundational. You see, if you don’t know what your doctrine is, you have no message to share with anybody. And when Paul was ever accused, he didn’t defend himself, like I said, he stood on the doctrine of which he preached and which held him up. Well, evidently there were those who circulated around Corinth that were preaching the Law and they said they came there with letters of recommendation. This all started back in 3:1-3. And as a result of this they criticized Paul and accused him. He didn’t have letters of recommendation when he went to Corinth. Well, naturally. If you look in the book of Acts, when he went to Corinth he didn’t go to start a church, he went to Corinth in order to make tents. But God was so using him and His hand was so upon him, the church of Corinth began and he had to tell them, “You are my letter of recommendation.”

See, this was their way of tearing down the messenger so they could slip in their message of Law. But Paul was confident that his ministry was authentic. Now why would that be? How could he have such confidence that his ministry was authentic? Because he knew that his adequacy was not of him; his adequacy was of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he says that in verse 5. He says, “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.” You see, Paul was a servant of a new covenant which verse 6 says was built on better promises. It says in verse 6, “who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Now the difference in the confidence and his ministry and the confidence of those who served an old covenant, a covenant of Law, is absolutely incredible. Now to illustrate this, the apostle Paul, from 7-11, uses the word “glory” ten different times to contrast this confidence. Paul showed us in verse 7 how when the old covenant, the covenant of Law was given to Moses, yes, it came with glory. Now before I go any further let’s make sure we remember what glory is. It’s the word that means to bring true recognition to someone, whether it be visibly or verbally. In other words, we ought to live daily to when people look at us they see who He is, not who we are; they’re not interested in us. And to make sure we’re a reflection of His glory.

Well, the example we gave was of somebody being out in the sunshine, in the presence of the sun, and the glory of the sun gets upon their skin and it's called sunburn and when they walk away from the sun, that glory begins to fade. Just like Moses: Moses had to go to the top of the mountain to be in the presence of God. And God took His divine finger, Exodus tells us, and wrote on those tablets of stone the Ten Commandments. And when he came off that mountain, it showed that he'd been in the presence of God because the glory, like the sunburn from being in the presence of the sun, the glory shone on his face. His face reflected and radiated the glory of God.

But here's the problem: it was external and temporary only. You see, just like when we get away from the sun, the glory of the sun fades away and that glory began to fade. And since the glory on Moses' face was fading, this caused Moses to wear a veil over his face and it tells you why. He didn't want the people to lose confidence in his leadership. He didn't want them to see that the glory was fading in his face. It says in verse 13, "and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel," and some people mistakenly think that it was so great they couldn't look at him. That's not it at all. He says, "might not look intently at the end of what was fading away."

So there was no confidence there. He knew that the covenant would put people to death. It killed; it condemned, and the glory faded away. But Paul was in total confidence because he was a servant of a new covenant. In his ministry, the glory of God had come to live in him and never faded away. It was not just upon him; it was in him. Paul says the old covenant was with glory, but the new covenant was in glory, in verse 11. He says, "For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory." Christ is the glory of God. He comes to live in the lives of believers and His glory never fades away. His glory is in us ever seeking to manifest itself through us so that people will look at us. And there's no veil hiding it; they look at us and they see the glory that is not fading away. His glory is manifested by His power.

You say, "How do I know His glory?" Every time you experience Him you're experiencing His glory, His presence, and you're changed from glory to glory. That's what the Christian life is all about. It's not a game. It's not something we add to our schedule every week. It's our whole life, it's our breath, it's everything, and the more we are in His presence, the more we behold Him as you'll see in the text later on, the more we're going to be transformed by His glory. What an awesome thing that is to begin to understand His glory lives in us and never fades away.

In one of the conferences we did there in Romania, there were three or four former Greek Orthodox priests that were there. They had come and had received Christ and as a result of that they were excommunicated in their church. They were accused of apostasy of all things and one of them read the letter that was sent to him all because he received Jesus into his heart. After I finished the message on preaching Christ in you, the hope of glory, he stood up and said, "I've got to say something."

And he began to share. And he said, "When I was a priest, we began to wonder why is it we can't get anything done. Everything is cold, everything is manufactured, there's no life, and for all those years, but now that I've become a believer and now that I've heard the message, I know what the difference is. The glory of God, the grace of God, Jesus has come to live in us. That's what the difference in the repenters [which they call believers] and the people in our church. Jesus made the difference. He comes to live in us." The veil has been taken away from these fellows. They saw it, God revealed Himself in the gospel.

Well, let's look and see what God wants us to understand today about being servants of a new covenant and living in the freedom of the Spirit. I want you to look at verse 11 before we get into it. One phrase I want to point out to you. It says in verse 11 again, "For if that which fades away was with glory." Now, that term "fades away" needs to be understood. Some of you, I know, you wonder why I take it into the Greek and all, but I want to tell you, this is what unlocks the door. It's present middle passive. Fading away, present means it's in the process. But middle passive is an important verb to understand; a certain type of a verb. If I tell this piano right here, "Piano, you get yourself over here." Now, you know and I know that the piano has no ability in itself to do what I've asked it to do.

So they put it middle passive, and even the middle voice has this same idea, that when you put it that way, they would have understood immediately that something has got to enable that to happen. So when it says the old is fading away, something is enabling it to fade away. And you say, "What is that?" Well, we're going to see in our text today, if the Lord Jesus Christ, when a person comes to receive Christ, then and only then has that Law faded away. Paul uses this as his example. He says it several times. He says every time Moses is preached, every time the Law is preached a veil comes over their face: they cannot see. Now only when they come to receive Christ does that old covenant pass away.

In fact, Paul called the Law the ministry of death, the ministry of condemnation, and the letter that kills. And it's only done away with in Christ. If you're here today and you're not a believer, it has not been done away with in your life. It stills hovers over you, condemning everything that you do. It is what keeps man under boundaries here. It is what hovers over us. But when a person comes and receives Christ, then that Law immediately is gone. You see, for the One who gave the Law, and the One who came as the God-Man to fulfill that Law, He now lives in us. The glory of God has come to live in us: the Law can no longer condemn us. But

only if you're a believer. That's what causes this to fade away, is in Christ: that's when it's gone. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, Paul says in Romans 8:1.

So Christ is the fulfillment of all that we cannot do as the God-Man. And now He lives in us. He even paid our sin debt on the cross and when He comes to live in your life, the old has faded away. Let me read the text and then we'll jump into it today, just to see what it means to walk and to live in the freedom of the Spirit.

Verse 12, "Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Now in my mind—and you could take a different verse—but in my mind the key verse is verse 17. And verse 17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit;" pay attention to that phrase "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." So today let's talk about what it means to walk in this liberty of the Spirit. The old has faded away; Christ has come to live in us. The glory of God is in us, Who never fades away. The word "liberty" is the word *eleutheria*. There's an island in the Bahamas that is Eleuthera; that's what it means: freedom. But remember this, and I want to make sure I drive it home now: freedom is never the right to do as you please. Freedom is the power to do as you should. Don't confuse the definition of this term.

Walking and living in the freedom of the Spirit means the passion to speak without fear

Alright: three things. First of all, walking and living in the freedom of the Spirit means the passion to speak without fear. Oh, my. When Christ lives in us and is allowed to live through us, His Spirit in us gives us an incredible not only ability to speak boldly the message of Christ, but the motivation to do it. He lives in us, Philippians says, to will and also to work without any fear, without any fear at all. Paul says, "Therefore," and he's building here, "having such a hope we use great boldness in our speech." Well, what in the world is he talking about?

The word "hope" that he uses here is *elpis*. *Elpis* in the Greek means "expectancy, certainty"; never, never is it very iffy. Several months ago a bunch of us put in for the once in a lifetime oryx hunt at White Sands. Now, I have never won a golf ball at a golf tournament, much less get drawn for something like this. But they were doing it, so I put in. So I could have said, "My hope is, I'll be able to go." See that was very iffy and not much of a possibility. But just wanted to let you know I got drawn and so now my hope is certain. I'm going!

You see, hope in our terms is uncertain; but hope in biblical terms, when it comes to our salvation, when it comes to the things God has given us, He's totally certain, so don't ever misunderstand that. Paul's certain hope that he stood on was the fact that Christ, the glory of God, lived in him. Paul said because of His life in him, he used great boldness in his speech. The word "used" again is in that middle voice, and it's almost like saying, "Hey guys, you can do it, you can do it, you can." Everybody walks out to the parking lot and says, "No I can't, I promise you I can't." What he's saying is something is enabling me to do this. I was enabled to be bold: that's the Christ in him. That's the glory of God in him.

The term "boldness" is a term that means "frankness," straight out honesty, clarity, with no veil, open, unhindered. To speak it why? Because he's got the doctrine to back it up. He's got something to stand on: he's got the message deep in his heart and he has Christ living in him. Christ in Paul was enabling him and motivating him to speak openly and boldly concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ and most of the time in was in the face of people who only understood the Law, and he had no fear whatsoever: he stood boldly.

I hear people telling me from time to time and I've been one of them, and they say, "I'm just scared to death to share my testimony with anybody. I just don't know what to share." Well, do you understand Who lives in you, and do you also understand to just let the doctrine be what you stand on? If you know what you believe and why you believe it, Christ in you will give you the boldness to share it with others. Speaking of Paul's preaching, remember when he preached, the first place he would go would be the synagogue; and it says in Acts 28:31, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

Paul said, "Something changed in me." Kind of like Peter. Do you remember when Peter cowered down and denied Jesus three times and then the Spirit came to live in him and then he said, "Hey, do whatever you want to do to me, man. We can't help but speak of the things we've seen and we've heard." God in him gave him that boldness. Ephesians 6:19 says, "and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." So Christ, the glory of God living in us, gives us the divine inspiration, motivation, and enablement to speak boldly, but to speak the message of Jesus Christ.

This is not just somebody who likes to talk. This is not somebody who is brazen enough to say something: this is divine. This is God working in someone, preaching Christ the Mediator of a better covenant which dismisses the Law and its condemnation and preaches the glory of God to live in us. Now Paul contrasts this bold confidence to speak with the apparent lack of it with Moses who had the old covenant that God had spoken to him, the glory that was fading away on his face.

He says in verse 13, "and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away." Now Paul clearly again shows why that veil was put on it: it was fading away, the glory was fading away. There was no confidence in Moses to preach what he preached because everything he said condemned every man to death. He did not want his people to lose confidence in him as a leader, so he just put a veil over his face. I don't know if we're ever going to grasp this. There is no glory on a person who preaches the performance mentality of the flesh. There is no glory, none whatsoever. There's no life.

I wonder why we can't understand this in our day? The message of freedom in Christ, the message of dying to self. The only thing I can figure is that people just don't want to deal with themselves, they don't want to deal with the flesh; and therefore they'd rather live performance based than they would walk in the freedom and the liberty of the Spirit, which enables them and motivates them to share the message boldly with other. What the Law says is death, Paul says, what the Law says is condemnation, what the Law says kills every self-effort. The Law hardens one's mind to the gospel of Christ.

The word "harden" is coming up in verse 14, again, is in that passive voice. Here somebody is actually causing the action from the very outset. In other words, every time the Law was preached their minds were hardened. Some people translate this "blinded." Verse 14, "But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ." Only in Christ. "But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart." Now the word "minds" there, "their minds were hardened," is the part of the mind that understands, noema. It's their thoughts, their understandable thoughts that they can grasp to understand something. It's hardened, the whole process is hardened.

The word "hardened" is the word poroo, and it means callous. Another thing young people haven't gotten to is calluses. They will. But you know those calluses that grow on your feet or wherever they are and they're like heavy, thick skin that grows over something and to touch it, it's insensitive to the touch. That's why it's translated in many places "blinded." A synonym of that word is skleros, and we get the word sclerosis from it, which is hardening over a period of time. You see, when the Law was preached, when this old performance mentality is preached over and over and over, there's a hardening that happens and people cannot see the good news of Christ in us, the hope of glory and the lost people are blinded even to the gospel message of good news. They're bound, totally bound, to earning their own righteousness and they haven't understood the frustration. What the Law demands, Romans 7 teaches us, it cannot produce. So when the Law was preached it can't awaken the heart: there's no faith that can spring forth that will meet its standard when a person is only under the Law. Only in Christ is there life. His Spirit brings that light to us.

Verse 16, "but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." Now we understand immediately the context being Israel and the old covenant and how when it's preached. But I want to tell you, that jumps over beyond the cross; because if you're in a works mentality, a performance based, you've got to do it. If you don't witness to 25 people tomorrow, if you don't pass out 75 tracts, boy it's not going to get done, it's not going to get done. Do you hear what I say? And you grow up under that and what happens is there is a veil: you don't even understand. Christ in you, who demands it, lives in you to enable it. And that's the tragedy of this whole thing.

Of our conferences that we did in Romania, and we had them there from Serbia, from Russia, all over Romania, my fourteenth trip there, we touched about 350 to 500 churches, every one of them grew up under nothing but the Law of mentality even though, yes, they received Jesus. But like in the book of Galatians, that wasn't enough. They tried to perfect themselves with their own works and as a result of it they've been suffering for years.

And this lady was weeping, came up to me in broken English and she just was weeping and she said, "Pastor, today in the service," and I had preached on Christ in you, "God touched me today. Something changed in my heart." And when those pastors came to me weeping and they said, "We've been under this performance based mentality for so long and we're so sick of it." My translator said to me, "Every pastor in the eastern world needs to hear this message because every one of them are beat down every day by that old performance law mentality which veils the gospel and the good news of Jesus Christ living in and through us.

The performance is demanded even with believers. There's no power to meet the demand in one's flesh. The flesh is dead and it's insensitive to be able to do what it wants to do. Read Romans 7:14-25 again if you don't understand this. That's what Paul says. Only in Christ is the veil lifted. I remember when it was lifted for me, years ago. I was a believer but again, I was trying to perfect myself with the works and the energy of my flesh. And I cried for days when God began to lift that veil and I saw the real good news of what Christianity is all about.

See, His life in us enables us, but especially in this point, to speak boldly. Witnessing is not a cause, it's a consequence of a person

living, letting the glory be reflected in his life. There's no effort as long as he doctrinally can stand on what he's telling other people. That's what is so important.

Walking and living in the freedom of the Spirit means the power to be what we're commanded to be

But then secondly, it means the power to be what we're commanded to be. Verse 17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit;" and that's the key verse, or the one I'm keying off of, "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit lives in us so there's liberty. So what does this mean? The freedom that we have in Christ again, is never the right to do as you please. It's never that right. It's the power to do as we should. In Christ under the new covenant, in the glory of God, we're free from the condemnation of the Law. God's grace saves us, God's grace keeps us, no sin can forfeit our salvation in Christ. We need to basically make sure we understand that. But we do not have a license to do as we please.

You know, it's interesting. Paul has already explained to these Corinthians this whole truth. They know exactly what he's talking about. We have to study it and dig it out. They knew what he was talking about. In his second letter to them, which we know as 1 Corinthians, he said in 6:12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me but I will not be mastered by anything." Now, that's key. He repeats it in chapter 10 when he's dealing with the weaker brother. He says in 10:23, "All things are lawful" —sure, any sin that you commit is not going to take you out of the kingdom of God once Christ has come to live in you—"but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful," but then he changes and he says, "but not all things edify." The word "edify" means "builds up." Not everything builds up. Some things tear down.

The Corinthians had perverted this whole concept of grace to justify their sinning and particularly in chapter 6, in immoral areas. They lived in a bad world. They used the same argument the Romans used and Paul had to recite it back to them in Romans 6:1 when he said, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!" That's like driving up in a parking place and a sign says "don't even think about it." Don't even ask that question. They pretended in Corinth to have a theological justification for doing what they were doing. Like many Christians today, in Corinth they rationalized their sinful habits and their thinking. I said they lived in a society that was notoriously immoral. They even had prostitution in their temple and it was looked at as a spiritual cleansing of all things. It was almost as bad as it is today.

Just as it was hard to give up man's way of doing things in the first four chapters and give up their worldly way of thinking and to give up their pride and to give up their divisive spirit, it evidently was pretty tough for them to give up their immoral ways of living, so they justified it by saying, "All things are lawful. I can just do whatever I want to do." Paul counters that thinking saying, "Yes, all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable."

There's a little saying I remember from years ago and I've shared it a couple of times here. Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray; it will keep you longer than you ever intended to stay; and it will cost you more than you ever dreamed you'd pay. Oh, you won't lose your salvation once you're a believer. But will you pay? You will pay big time. Not only will you pay, the people around you will pay.

So the Corinthian church already knew what Paul was talking about when he said, "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is"—where is he? He lives in us—"there is liberty." The divine enablement to do what we're commanded to do. Do you see with the Law there is no ability, only in the Spirit? Not the right to do as we please, but the power to do as we should. In the new covenant, the covenant of grace, Christ, the glory of God, lives in us and wants to radiate His glory in recognition through us. We're free from any condemnation of the law; we're free to speak boldly the truth of the gospel in the face of whoever is there.

I used to go to Romania, and the Communists would come to the service and they always made themselves recognizable. They wanted to put fear in your heart. They wanted you to know that they're sitting there. I remember one church we were in, this guy was so noticeable. He had sunglasses on at a night service in a church that had dim lighting to begin with. And he was just sitting there staring at me. I've seen church members act that way before, but I knew who he was. And I want to tell you, I had a boldness that I don't know if I've ever had in America. I'm sure maybe I have, but I noticed it there. Man, I preached, and I preached right to him. I never looked at another person in that whole place. I singled him out and I preached right to him that whole entire message about the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ; that Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship with God the Father through His Son. The glory of God has come to live in us and makes us free, free to speak boldly wherever we are: free to be what we're commanded to be.

Walking and living in the freedom of the Spirit means the potential to be changed into His image

Well, the third thing is finally, it means the potential to be changed into His image. We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. Now this is the grand finale to everything he began simply by saying "You are my letter of recommendation. My adequacy is in Christ." Everything he's been saying goes all the way back to what happened in the first of chapter 3 and really back to chapter 2. He said, "I am a man chained to the chariot of God and the sweet fragrance of my life is Christ living in me."

Moses was only one man, bless his heart, only one man out of two and a half million people that got to go up on top of the mountain and be in the presence of God. And only one man could come off that mountain with the glory on his face, even though it was fading. But look what Paul says in verse 18, "But we all," behold. You know, only one person could go behind the veil. I mean, Moses was a special person; nobody else got this privilege. Every one of us has already had this privilege and gets this privilege every day of our life. We all behold, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord. The pictures of one looking in to something and seeing a reflection of Who God is come back to us. Like looking into a mirror that's used in secular Greek of looking into a pool of clear water and seeing a reflection come back to you. It's a beautiful picture. When we looked into the gospel of Jesus Christ with no veil, just open and the Spirit of God has opened our hearts, we see in the gospel the glory of Christ and at that very moment we were changed by that glory and we became a brand new person in Jesus Christ.

But what he's talking about here, that was an event. That was our birth. He's talking about here a process that goes on from that birth; continuing to be changed from glory to glory. We must daily continue to behold Him, the beholding is key, so that we might be transformed. I don't know if I can get this out like it got in, but this is so good. Verse 18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as the Lord, the Spirit. And again, looking into something and seeing God reflected back. It's in the present middle tense. How many times have I brought this up in this message? Piano, come here. You can't come here, so something has to enable it to come here. Something is enabling the beholding, something is enabling the transformation. What is this? The transformation again is the result of the beholding.

The word "transformation" is metamorphoo. Now you know this word. What word do we get from that? Metamorphosis. That little old caterpillar; ugly little old thing. And one day out of the secretion of its own body there's a cocoon. What's going on with this little critter? And all of a sudden one day, out emerges a butterfly that is free to fly, no longer made to stay in one place. From now on, he can fly. The freedom that has come; that's the word that's used here. There's a metamorphosis that is still building on the liberty that we have in the Spirit of God.

Now what is it that enables both the beholding and the transformation day by day? One is implied, one's very explicit. It's the Word of God and it's the Spirit of God. And I can back both of those up. Note the last part of the verse, "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

First of all, we know this: it involves the Word of God because Paul uses that word metamorpho in Romans 12:1-2, and it's exactly speaking of the Word of God. Let me read it to you. "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." By the way, that's what worship is; it's not a song and it's not a feeling. Verse 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"—that means to renovate; rip out the old way of thinking and put in the new way of thinking—"that you may prove what is the good, acceptable, and the perfect will of God."

Only the Word of God renews the mind, folks. There's nothing else. That's what Paul said. He didn't defend himself; he defended the doctrine he stood on. He knew the Word would hold him up. If the believer will just get in to God's Word. If you come here, you know you're going to hear it. If you go to your classes, you know you're going to hear it, but that's not enough. The bottom line is not to preach and teach the Word. The bottom line is to teach people how to learn for themselves, to get into the Word for themselves.

If the believer will get into God's Word, then daily, God will reveal Himself to you. You will behold Him. "What do you mean? I'm going to see an image in my room?" No, but He's going to show you what He requires. He's going to show you Who He is. He's going to reveal to you what He wants to do in your life. And I'll tell you, when you're willing to submit to that there's going to be a transformation take place in your life. That's what Romans teaches us.

The second thing then we know for sure, not only does it involve the Word daily in our life; it involves the Holy Spirit, as he says right here, "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." Now he does that two times in verse 17 and in verse 18: he takes the word Lord—capitalized in the New Testament means Jesus Christ—and equates it with the Spirit.

It's incredible to me. In one of my conferences we had a guy from a different persuasion and he said, "I love this conference, but you just didn't talk about the Holy Spirit enough." Well, bless his sweet heart, the Holy Spirit, He wasn't upset. Jesus said "when the Spirit comes He will bear witness of Me," speaking of Himself, Jesus. He will not speak of Himself. By the way, I just want you to know that there's no jealousy in the Trinity. For those of you that are trying to defend the Holy Spirit, will you relax? Father gives it to the Son, Son gives it to the Spirit, Spirit gives it back to Jesus and He gives it back to the Father. There is a whole lot of jealousy going on here, right? It's the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. There's one God in three persons, not three Gods, and the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He is God. He is God in our life.

He says we're being transformed by Him. Now the Spirit is one, you and I, when we look into the Word, the Spirit reveals Christ to

our hearts. And as we're willing to continue to respond, the Spirit of God is the One who transforms us and what people see on the outside is the glory of the One who is living on the inside, whose glory never fades away.

So Moses reflected the glory of God, only one man got to be in His presence. But it faded away. But daily we get the privilege and the potential of reflecting the glory of God to other people. I guess you could say if you talk about His life and His character and the fruit of His Spirit, there is a way we could spiritually veil that glory. Not that it's fading away, but that we're the ones unwilling to release it in our life.

Some people have asked me, "Are you talking about the second blessing?" No, I'm talking about normal Christianity. I'm talking about waking up to what we already have. We're not getting anything new. It's learning to live in what we already have. You know what being filled with the Spirit is? I've got this bottle of water. Now, if I take the cap off of this and I'm going to drink it, most people think being filled with the Spirit is getting this thing, taking the cap off and drinking. Then, "I'm empty; I've got to hurry back to church. Preacher, you filled my cup last week but I didn't make it to Tuesday, I've got to come back Wednesday and get my cup filled again. It's awful." That's not being filled with the Spirit. His glory never fades away. Being filled with the Spirit is taking the top off this bottle and knocking the bottom out of it and putting it in the river and letting the river flow through it.

Do you see the difference? You see, if you're just willing to be yielded, His glory never fades away. It's being reflected in your life all the time. In the way you talk to each other and the way you treat each other. Jesus would not crush a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax. As a matter of fact he was called a lamb. Did you know a lamb is the only animal gentle enough for a dove to rest upon? But you know the Holy Spirit, when it came to rest on Jesus and it said it came as a dove. That dove rested on His head, the Lamb who was gentle enough that a dove could rest upon Him. That's when you know the glory of God is working in a person's life.

It's not in some zealous, religious performer trying to do something for God and grab the glory while he can. It's a humble person who bows down and says, "God, I can't, You never said I could, but You can, You always said You would." That's Your glory in me being seen.

Let me ask you a question. Are you being changed from glory to glory? Are you allowing the glory within you to radiate through you? How do you know that? Can I share with you what Jesus has done in my heart. And you walk away after you've shared it and say, "Who was that? That's not shy little old me." Where did that boldness come from? Then you begin to see what God begins to work in your life. The power to become what He wants you to be. The potential to be changed from glory to glory.

You know what happens after awhile? They see so much less of us they can finally see Him who lives within us. That's Christian life. That's what we've been preaching for years. That has to be caught, it cannot be taught. The Spirit has to reach into your heart and show you the glory of God as the Word comes forth, that's the Spirit and as you respond, the changes in us.